on cigarette industry to enhance cigarette exports.

Compulsory usage of Jute Bags

*377. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is widespread violation of laws regarding compulsory usage of jute bags by cement units in the country; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard and action, if any, taken against any such units?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) and (b) The provisions of Jute Packaging Materials Act, 1987 (JPMA) were not implemented for Cement Industry till April, 1996 as the matter was pending before the Supreme Court. Subsequently, several representations have been made to the Standing Advisory Committee appointed under the Act in Ministry of Textiles, regarding unsuitability of jute packaging for cement, because of hygroscopic nature of the commodity, loss on account of seepage and because of health hazards to the workers, etc. The Standing Advisory Committee has since made its recommendations which are under consideration of the Government.

New National Housing Policy

*378. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have lately evolved a new National Housing Policy;

(b) if so, the main features thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken to implement the same?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) and (b) A new National Housing and Habitat Policy is under consideration of the Government. The Policy is yet to be finalised and approved by the Government.

(c) The policy can be implemented only after it is approved.

Instrumentation Limited, Palghat

*379. SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received any representation from the employees of Instrumentation Limited, Palghat (Kerala) that the Palghat Unit should be made into an autonomous unit as the tagging of this unit with the loss making Kota Unit, works against the interests of the employees of Palghat Unit; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Revival Plan formulated by Instrumentation Limited envisages that the Palghat unit would be converted into a joint venture company. Final decision would be taken by BIFR which is a quasi-judicial body.

Jobs for Disabled and Handicapped

*380. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of disabled and handicapped persons has risen in absolute terms in the country while those getting jobs has been going down;

(b) if so, the details thereof with particular reference to Maharashtra; and